



Region 6 REOC Update West Fertilizer Plant Explosion

US Environmental Protection Agency

Report as of 830 CDT April 19, 2013

Overview: On April 17, 2013 a fire and explosion occurred at the West Fertilizer Company located in West, Texas. Local, state, and federal response personnel have responded to the incident. The U.S. EPA has mobilized personnel to the incident to conduct air monitoring activities upon request from Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

The impact of the explosion has impacted an approximate ½ mile radius which includes 50 to 60 structures including residential homes, a nursing home, an apartment community and a middle school.

EPA Region 6 Field Activities

At 0000 hours on April 18, 2013 the EPA Airborne Spectral Photometric Collection Technology (ASPECT) aircraft conducted an overflight of the facility and surrounding area. Ammonia levels during the overflight were detected between 6 to 10 parts per million (ppm) at 650 feet downwind or southeast of the site and consistent with wind direction.

At 1208 hours on April 18, 2013, the EPA ASPECT conducted a second overflight of the facility and surrounding area. Ammonia levels during the overflight were detected southeast of the site and consistent with wind direction. The detections were at 6 ppm and 3 ppm.

Between 0430 to 0530 on April 18, 2013 the 6th Civil Support Team (CST) and Waco Fire Department HAZMAT conducted a Level B entry to deploy air monitoring instrumentation near the incident location. On April 18, 2013, TCEQ contractors performed an entry to assess a leaking anhydrous ammonia tank

on-site. According to TCEQ representatives, the release was secured by closing a valve on one of the bullet tanks.

EPA is performing air monitoring in residential areas around the site, including areas where search and rescue operations are on-going and areas not affected by the evacuation order, which remained in place as of 1800 hrs on 18 April. Specific chemicals being monitored for are volatile organic compounds, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, carbon monoxide, and lower explosive limit of methane gas. As of 0030 on 19 April, monitoring results have not exceeded actionable levels.

EPA is coordinating with ATF, OSHA, CSB, TCEQ, 6th CST and the Office of the Texas State Chemist on current and future site operations. The EPA OSC and EPA CID Agent-in-Charge will attend a briefing for Agency Leads on April 19 at 0800 hrs and will participate in a tour of the incident location including the area excluded by law enforcement.

TCEQ contractors have been deployed and are currently conducting air monitoring around the facility perimeter. Other state and local responders continue conducting search and rescue operations in affected neighborhoods near the incident location.

An official statement of the cause of the incident has not been released. Investigations into the order of events and cause of the explosion are on-going.

Personnel	EPA OSC In Field	EPA RSC in Field	Contractor In Field	EPA In REOC	Contractor In REOC	Total
	4	2	8	8	2	24
Total	4	2	8	8	2	

*OSCs deployed with the Mobile Command Post

REOC ACTIVITIES:

Addressed requests for information regarding the Risk Management Plan, prior regulatory actions against the facility. Gathered information regarding enforcement activities, the facilities Risk Management Plan, and the incident for use by responders, EPA Senior Executives, OMB, and media.

Provided access to the media in the Regional Reading Room to review the RMP file for the facility.

Created GISviewer to capture and display all air monitoring and aspect data being collected and shared the information with responders, TCEQ and EPA HQ. The GISviewer is located on the OSC website.

Issued an ammonia inhalation fact sheet to be distributed to the responders.

Coordinated with TCEQ on assistance for Drinking Water. At this time, TCEQ is not requesting assistance. West receives their water from the City of Waco. The aboveground tank in West is in good condition and the City is keeping it filled. There was damage to some of the distribution lines from the aboveground tank; however the City isolated and cut off those lines in order to keep the proper pressure in the lines. There will be a boiled water notice. Per TCEQ media was to be notified of the boil water notice. TCEQ also looked at the aquifers and don't believe there is an impact based on the formations that are used as a source for drinking water.